Nuclear Race between Not Yet Nuclear States?

Tension related to nuclear proliferation has risen again. This is largely due to the rhetoric of leaders of certain countries hinting that the build-up of nuclear arsenals epoch is coming back throughout the world. This has already fuelled fears of nuclear armament stock levels in the world and unpredictability of those in whose hands warheads remain.

For example, the Pentagon recently admitted something that might sound not so comforting for the Department. Serious mistakes and "misunderstandings" sometimes occur in its nuclear arsenal, in particular, related to the possibility of accidentally launching ground-based nuclear missiles. It seems that such "admission", combined with Washington's policy being unpredictable in the recent past, can not guarantee a cloudless and peaceful sky...

It seems that the world is far from "pull back from the brink", considering that hundreds of nuclear warheads are currently operational in several countries around the world.

At the same time, it should be noted that there are only five declared nuclear-weapon states in the world: The United States, Russia, China, France, and Britain. They are officially recognized as such in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in 1970. This Treaty recognizes and legitimizes their nuclear arsenals but they are not liable to enhance or maintain them constantly. On the contrary, they assumed the commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons.

There are four other countries that have nuclear weapons: Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea. These countries have not signed the Treaty on Non-Proliferation, but they possess approximately 340 units of such weapons.

In addition to these four countries, a number of politicians in other countries have increased their calls to create their own nuclear weapons, making wrong assumptions that their own nuclear weapons allegedly can guarantee their future security.

Indeed, although the Constitution of Japan bans the creation of nuclear power weapons, Japanese politicians have persistently recalled research into this area by Japan during World War II, and even about Ni-Go nuclear research program in 1943. It should be also recalled that on August 12, 1945, three days before the announcement of Japan's surrender to the Allies, an explosion occurred in the sea of Japan, not far from the northern part of the Korean Peninsula, when a fireball of 1000 meters raised into the sky, followed by a giant mushroom-shaped cloud. According to the American expert Charles Stone, an atomic bomb of Japan was detonated there.

After China's first nuclear test in 1964, Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Satō said to President Lyndon Johnson when they met in January 1965, that if the Chinese Communists had nuclear weapons, the Japanese should also have them.

Today, such statements can be heard in Japan more often. According to Chinese experts, Japan has a stock of already processed nuclear raw materials for 6000 atomic devices, which corresponds to the level of Russia and the United States, which, have 7,000 and 6800 such devices, respectively estimated by relevant experts. According to many experts, this country needs no more than a year to create its own nuclear weapons. The fact that Japan is a leading space power is another consideration. It has the means of delivery to use nuclear weapons.

Saudi Arabia, which has been talking about it for a long time, is also trying to match Japan in its efforts to create its own nuclear weapons. Regularly accusing Iran of threatening regional security with its nuclear program, Saudi Arabia has repeatedly stated its intention to possess an atomic bomb. So, this was officially stated by Prince Turki al-
Faisal, the former KSA Ambassador to the United States and head of Saudi Arabia’s intelligence agency during the international forum on the regional situation, held in December 2011 in Riyadh: “in a situation when the efforts of the international community are failing to persuade Israel to give up its nuclear chemical and biological arsenal, and we cannot prevent Iran from creating such weapons, our task in relation to future generations is to seriously study the possibility of creating weapons of mass destruction by us.” At the same time, addressing representatives of the Persian Gulf region (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman), Prince Turki tried to disguise such an aspiration of Riyadh by saying that such a passionately desired Saudi Arabia’s atomic bomb would only have a “daunting task”.

In addition, back in 2013, Mark Urban, the BBC Two’s Newsnight presenter, referring to a senior source in NATO, pointed out that “the Saudi authorities have invested heavily in Pakistan's nuclear program and at any moment can receive nuclear weapons from Islamabad, which are already ready for transportation.”

In 2018, during his foreign trip to search for investors in the Saudi Arabia 2030 project, Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud officially warned Western countries that Riyadh would "very quickly" become the owner of nuclear weapons if the West did not hurry up to organize a coalition against Iran.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in many countries, Riyadh was suspected of building a plant to produce nuclear weapons after a recent report in The Wall Street Journal that in the North-West of the Kingdom, with the participation of China, a plant is being built to process uranium concentrate - the so-called "yellowcake", which can be used both for the production of nuclear weapons and for peaceful purposes.

However, his article clearly appeared not accidentally coinciding with the publication by Bloomberg of a retrospective analysis of how bad it will be for Saudi Arabia if Joe Biden is elected and how a possible democratic President will punish the Saudi political leadership. In particular, the article itself emphasizes that "the former Vice President (Biden) called the Kingdom a pariah and threatened to stop the sale of American weapons, the largest buyer of which is Saudi Arabia", and in addition noted “a greater desire to cooperate with Iran, the Kingdom's main rival”.

Thus, if the US develops the situation with Saudi Arabia according to the “Iranian scheme", the consequences may be very different, but they will all be negative for US-Saudi relations: from diplomatic cooling to the application of sanctions. And any steps by Riyadh can be expected, both in developing its own nuclear program and in finding a more predictable partner for itself than the fickle Washington establishment.

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